

COMMISSIONER OF POLITICAL PRACTICES

Our Mission

We carry out our assigned responsibilities monitoring and enforcing campaign finance and practices, lobbying, and government ethics standards fairly and impartially. We serve the public and interested parties in a helpful and responsive way.

FY 2010 & 2011 Goals and Objectives

(Revised September 9, 2008)

Goal 1: Provide accurate and helpful information.

Objectives and status

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to update the agency website to provide useful, understandable information about ethics, lobbying, and campaign finance and practices laws and rules. Develop a more user-oriented web listing and include more Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) handouts. 	On-going through August, 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review procedures for capturing campaign reporting data; develop a plan for timely completion of the biennial campaign finance report at the conclusion of the election cycle. 	By August, 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplement the formal complaint docket with scanned images of the original complaint and supporting documentation, as well as all public documents. Include rejected and dismissed complaints as well. 	By October, 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the search capabilities for past formal decisions with key word searches and summary information. 	By December, 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access on the web to advisory opinions and post an index of opinions. 	By October, 2009

GOAL 2: Facilitate more accurate and timely filing of the required lobbying financial reports. Facilitate public disclosure of lobby-related activity under our jurisdiction.

Objectives and status

▪ Encourage on-line registration, fee payment, and financial reporting.	Seasonal through February 2011
▪ Add material to the lobbyist's handbook that will clarify and provide more useful guidance on the filing schedule and filing requirements. Develop additional FAQ's for Lobbying section of the website.	On-going through December 2010
▪ Implement a program to audit lobbying financial reports and use the findings to provide guidance and instruction on lobby reporting.	On-going through December 2010

GOAL 3: Facilitate accurate and timely filing and public disclosure of the required campaign finance reports.

Objectives and status

▪ Provide CPP presence at campaign schools and other party functions; highlight and respond to frequent questions, misunderstandings, and complaint areas. Seek new ideas and suggestions for better ways to conduct CPP business. Implement good ideas.	Ongoing
▪ Update website descriptions of the complaint procedure and the decision processes to provide more helpful guidance and reduce filing errors and misdirected or erroneous complaints.	By September, '09
▪ Revise the office policy manual to reflect changes in office procedures brought about by the conversion to digital processes.	By August, 2009
▪ Develop additional campaign-oriented FAQ's for the website.	By March, 2010
▪ Update and enhance the online reporting and search services to make them more useful and more widely used.	By May, 2010

GOAL 4: Improve Compliance

Objectives and status

▪ Provide training and informational mailings to Political Party committees to improve their compliance with reporting requirements.	Throughout the 2010 election cycle
▪ Implement a procedure and seek specific rule authority to allow CPP to formally disband a non-responsive PAC.	By June 2010

▪ Publicize Orders of Non-compliance on the web and in news stories.	Ongoing
▪ Supplement the formal complaint docket with information on civil penalties and settlements.	By January 2010

GOAL 5: Expedite resolution of campaign finance and practices complaints.

Objectives and status

▪ Update current complaint investigation procedures to allow for a more timely investigation of formal complaints.	By September, '09
▪ Clear the backlog of campaign complaints so that future complaint investigations can normally be concluded within 4 to 6 months of the date the complaint was filed.	By December, 2009
▪ Develop a notification system to provide the complainant and respondent with information on the start of complaint investigations.	By September, '09
▪ Set objectives and develop a work plan to shorten, when feasible, the time-frame for final resolution of complaints.	By September, '09

GOAL 6: Ensure that physical security of the office is adequate

Objectives and status

▪ Develop and institute an organizational security plan.	By October, '09
▪ Upgrade current physical security controls.	By December, 2009
▪ Schedule and complete regular, recurring security reviews of the facility.	Ongoing

GOAL 7: Bring the office into compliance with SAS 112 (D of A Internal control guidelines)

Objectives and status

▪ Update office internal control policies and document the related accounting processes.	By July, 2009
▪ Implement internal control and testing requirements.	By July, 2009

Commissioner of Political Practices Program Goals

Agency/Program #: 3202-01-G2

Division:

Program: Administration

Agency Name:	Commissioner of Political Practices	
Agency Contact:	Dennis Unsworth	444-2942
LFC Contact:	Representative Sesso, Representative Taylor	
LFD Liaison:	Kris Wilkinson	444-5834
OBPP Liaison:	Shawn Graham	444-0054

Program or Project Description:

This project involves providing an electronic filing system and additional resources on the web for political campaigns in order to simplify reporting, reduce campaign reporting errors, enhance public disclosure, and improve compliance with the law.

Appropriation, Expenditure and Source

Fund Name:	2008		2009		Approp & Expenditure numbers are as of August 29, 2008
	Approp.	Expended	Approp.	Expended	
General Fund	58,101	58,101	57,195	5,751	
State Special					
Federal Funds					
Total:	\$58,101	\$58,101	\$57,195	\$5,751	

Legislative Goal(s):

Facilitate accurate and timely filing of the required campaign finance reports.

Legislative Performance Measures:

Reduce filing errors by 25 percent by December 2008. Point those with questions to the website and maintain timely and topical information so that fewer than 25 percent of callers call back with more questions.

2009 Biennium Significant Milestones:

Completion Dates

		Target	Actual
1	Testing for candidate registration and reporting is underway.	12/21/2007	Registration -- 12/7/2007
2	Launch of candidate registration and reporting is planned for early in the new year.	1/10/2008	Registration -- 12/12/2007
3	Development of committee registration is underway with launch planned for March '08	3/15/2008	
4	Testing continues for both committee and candidate reporting. Services will be launched as soon as they're ready	5/13/2008	
5	The degree of success in meeting our goal will be evident following reporting on the Nov '08 election.	12/23/2008	failed
6	Remake the CPP website; provide more information and an enhanced 'search' function.	12/15/2008	6/23/2008

Agency Performance Report:

Target dates and revised target dates were not met for the candidate and committee services.

Numerous problems are being found in the test phase. We identify work-arounds and simple fixes whenever possible, but some issues require time-consuming changes including formal change orders and changes to the database. Despite the changes we have been able to stay within our budget and of course intend to through the end of the biennium.

About one year ago we identified a risk that the test phase of these projects would come at the height of the campaign cycle and that CPP staff would be unable to focus sufficiently on testing. That risk was realized, and despite our best efforts we have not been able to push through the test phase to resolve all the outstanding issues.

We've also found that important functionality wasn't anticipated in the design, a design that was formalized in 2005 for the candidate reporting service. This is the service receiving most of the attention and the highest priority. So we must weigh sacrificing important functionality in order to launch a system. As of this writing, the system still has too many problems to launch.

It appears our best course of action is to continue to work toward launching the services as soon as possible. If the services can be launched prior to March '09 they'll be useful for upcoming local and school elections and it will be a good opportunity to conduct a "real time" test.

Milestone 6, "Remake the CPP website; provide more information and an enhanced 'search' function" was achieved well ahead of schedule. The "makeover" of our website has been well received and the enhanced search function opens up past decisions to key word searches for the first time. These changes are part of the reason Montana received the "most improved" designation in a recent report by the respected Campaign Disclosure Project. They commented that "the homepage of the Commissioner of Political Practices' web site is cleanly designed and provides easy links to campaign disclosure reports, contribution limits, and other important contextual information."

LFD Narrative:

Version	Date	Author

Change Description